

SHOULD WE NEGOTIATE NOW?

Hazards of a Summit Meeting

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THE decline of political intelligence in the Western world has been demonstrated with particular force by the public outcry in favor of negotiations with the Soviet Union, following the revelation of Russian superiority in most departments of warfare. What is objectionable in this outcry is not the desire to negotiate, for it is axiomatic that an international conflict can be solved only in one of three ways: by war; by leaving it alone, in the hope that changed circumstances will smooth it over; or by a negotiated settlement.

What makes the present rush to negotiate so astounding is its timing and, more particularly, the almost eschatological expectations that people entertain about the prospect of a "summit meeting." If strength is a prerequisite for successful negotiations—as indeed it is—then there can hardly be a worse moment for negotiating with the Soviet Union than the present one. Today we are approaching negotiations not from strength but from obvious weakness, and it is just the recognition of our weakness which disposes us to negotiate. Ten years or even five years ago, we could have negotiated from a position as strong as any we shall be likely to command vis-à-vis the Soviet Union in the future. In those days Sir Winston Churchill put the case for a negotiated settlement in an address to the House of Commons on January 23, 1948:

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I will only venture now to say that there seems to me to be very real danger in going on drifting too long. I believe that the best chance of preventing a war is to bring matters to a head and come to a settlement with the Soviet Government before it is too late. This would imply that the Western democracies, who should, of course, seek unity among themselves at the earliest moment, would take the initiative in asking the Soviet for a settlement.

He put the same case, with even greater urgency, two years later in the House of Commons on March 28, 1950:

But if there is a breathing space, if there is more time, as I feel and do not hesitate to say, it would be a grave mistake . . . perhaps a fatal mistake to suppose that, even if we have this interlude, it will last for ever, or even last more than a few years. Time and patience, those powerful though not infallible solvents of human difficulties, are not necessarily on our side. When the last Parliament met, I mentioned four years as the period before any other power but the United States would possess the atomic bomb. That period has already gone by, and our position is definitely worse than it was in this matter both as regards our own safety and as to the conditions which are, I believe, effectively preserving the peace of the world. . . .

Therefore, while I believe there is time for a further effort for a lasting and peaceful settlement, I cannot feel that it is necessarily a long time, or that its passage will progressively improve our own security. Above all things, we must not fritter it away.

Yet fritter it away we did. In more than forty speeches Churchill raised his voice, warning and urging, but his counsel was dismissed, insofar as it was noted at all, as election propaganda. When we were as strong as we were ever likely to be vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, we refused to negotiate in earnest and waited to gain some additional strength. The terms on which we were willing to settle the German question, for example, would indeed have required a

strength sufficient to force the Soviet Union into unconditional surrender. Yet now, when we are getting as weak as one hopes we shall ever get, we are being pushed into negotiations. A case can of course be made for such a policy on grounds of propaganda; but little can be expected of it in the way of settling the substantive issues which separate the Soviet bloc from the Western world.

However, it is perhaps unjust to judge the present clamor for negotiations by the standards of a rational foreign policy. That clamor is in essence a search for an escape from the predicament that faces the Western world. Unable to deny any longer the mortal danger in which it finds itself, it is still unwilling to shoulder the burdens and come to terms with the risks and liabilities which that danger imposes upon it. Negotiations are in relation to the Russian threat what international organization used to be to "power politics": an easy alternative which would dispose of the burdens and risks of political life by turning one's back on them. Support the United Nations and your political troubles will be over, we were told ten years ago—negotiate and you can live in peace with the Russians, we are told today.

THE simplemindedness of this advice is matched by that of its counterpart: the unqualified assertion that it is impossible to negotiate with the Soviet Union. This assertion derives from the Soviet Union's practice of disregarding, with a brutal unconcern for the diplomatic niceties, treaty obligations which it deems contrary to her interests. This practice is thought to have tainted the Russian leaders with an unreliability and immorality in negotiations of which statesmen of other nations are supposed to be free. They appear to be set apart from other statesmen, as gangsters are set apart from honest men. In consequence, before one can negotiate with them, if one ever can, they must purge themselves of their vices and give tangible proof of their reformation. President Eisenhower, in his television speech of December 23, 1957, echoed the prevailing mood when he called

for "clear evidence of Communist integrity and sincerity in negotiation. . . ." It hardly needs pointing out that no great power will submit to such a moral test; hence, the condition itself precludes the possibility of serious negotiations. Thus the metaphysics of negotiations at any price meets the metaphysics of negotiations at hardly any price in the same realm of utopian unreality.

In truth, negotiations with the Soviet Union are not always feasible and desirable, but neither are they always impossible and undesirable. Whether or not one should seek to negotiate is not a question to be decided by abstract conclusions derived from irrational premises. Rather it is a matter of the concrete circumstances manifesting themselves as three separate issues: who shall negotiate, under what conditions, and on what issues? Whatever the answers to these questions may be, they are bound to be, not categorical and peremptory, but tentative and provisional. Yet the answers are indeed derived from the immutable principles of foreign policy, adapted to the concrete circumstances of particular situations.

The question as to who shall negotiate resolves itself, under present circumstances, into two separate questions: Shall negotiations be conducted at the summit, or by foreign ministers, or through ordinary diplomatic channels? And shall the principal Western allies negotiate with the Soviet Union and her allies, or shall the United States face the Soviet Union alone?

A summit conference composed of heads of state or prime ministers can perform a useful function only within the context of ordinary diplomatic negotiations. The issues which are negotiable between East and West are of such a complicated technical nature that they cannot be resolved in a brief and spectacular meeting of leaders who, even if they had the wisdom, knowledge, and power to settle them, would not have the time to do so.

Within the context of ordinary diplomatic discussions, however, a summit conference can perform two important functions. It can give to a settlement reached on the diplo-

matic level its final form, and bestow upon it the solemn approval of the nations concerned; and it can resolve a few outstanding issues by vesting concessions with an authority of which the ordinary diplomatic processes are naturally deprived. The proper place for a summit conference, then, is at the end, or close to the end, of ordinary diplomatic negotiations. To start negotiations with a summit meeting at which the national leaders either define their antagonistic positions in public, or else agree upon the desirability of permanent and universal peace, may serve the purposes of propaganda; it virtually precludes a settlement.

What holds true of summit meetings applies to a lesser degree also to foreign ministers' conferences. Publicity does not mix with negotiations on any level of social action, and publicity is inseparable from such conferences. Like summit meetings, foreign ministers' conferences can ratify solutions reached at the diplomatic level and settle issues which could not be settled at that lower level, and they can do so at more frequent intervals and for more extended periods of time. But they are no substitute, to quote Sir Winston Churchill again, for "formal diplomatic processes, with all their privacy and gravity. . . ."

WHICH nations shall participate in the negotiations? About this question there has been disagreement between the United States and the Soviet Union ever since the great conferences of the Second World War. The United States has consistently maintained that she will not enter the conference room with the Soviet Union unaccompanied by her principal allies. The Soviet Union, in turn, has as consistently defended the position that nations differ in power, hence also in influence and responsibility, and that a settlement ought to be negotiated only by those nations whose interest and power must support it. There can be no doubt that on this issue the Soviet Union has tradition and logic on her side. It is hard to see how the business of statesmanship can be carried on in any other way. Or does anyone suppose

that it would have been easier for England and Russia, at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, to settle their differences (enabling Disraeli to bring home "peace with honor") if, aside from the great powers, the Bosnians, the Herzegovinians, the inhabitants of Novi Bazar, the Montenegrins, Serbians, Bulgarians, Rumanians, Greeks, Albanians, Macedonians, Cypriots, Tunisians, and Armenians had also participated in the deliberations and decisions?

It is illuminating that the concern for the equal status of her allies which the United States has so consistently voiced, has not been shared by all the allies at all times. Their overriding desire for a negotiated settlement has tended to overshadow their concern with matters of prestige and even of interest. What they have asked for, and what they are entitled to, is consultation and information. What they have been at times willing to forgo is an equality of status to which no equality of interest, power, and responsibility corresponds, especially on issues which affect not primarily the particular interests of this nation or that, but the interest of mankind in its survival.

Under what conditions shall we negotiate? At a news conference on February 12, 1950, Dean Acheson, then Secretary of State, gave an answer to this question, admirable for the lucidity of its presentation and for its intellectual grasp of at least one side of the problem. He drew a distinction between paper agreements and agreements "which register the existing facts." The former are useless, for they will be broken whenever it is in the interest of the parties concerned. In Mr. Acheson's words,

it is not a matter of agreement but a matter of registering the existence of a situation. . . . Thus what I want to stress here is that agreements with the Soviet Union are useful when those agreements register or record an existing situation of fact, but that otherwise they are not of much use. So it has been our basic policy to build situations which will extend the area of possible agreement, that is, to create strength instead of weakness in many quarters.

Sir Winston Churchill, in his speech of January 23, 1948, made the same point, in

characteristically terse and hopeful language.

It is idle to reason or argue with the Communists. It is, however, possible to deal with them on a fair, realistic basis, and, in my experience, they will keep their bargains as long as it is in their interest to do so, which might, in this grave matter, be a long time, once things are settled. . . .

In other words, there is only one kind of negotiated settlement that will last—a settlement that transforms the identical or complementary interests of the contracting parties into a politically viable *modus vivendi*. When such a community of interests is either lacking at the outset or disappears some time after negotiation of the settlement, the settlement indeed becomes a “paper agreement,” to be disregarded by those whose interests it does not serve. It will make no difference for the substance of the case—although it may make one for the manner of operations—that those who must thus choose between the terms of the settlement and their interests are Americans or Russians: they cannot but choose the latter over the former.

WHAT, then, are the interests out of which negotiations must fashion a viable settlement? A nation which negotiates a settlement expects either to receive benefits or avoid disadvantages, or both. The United States offers to settle the German question on the basis of free elections which would inevitably remove East Germany from Russian control. The Soviet Union offers to settle the German question by recognizing the equal status of both German governments, thus opening the door to Russian influence and subversion in all of Germany. The terms of these respective solutions are totally beneficial to one side and totally disadvantageous to the other. They preclude the possibility of a negotiated settlement and allow only of an imposed one. On the other hand, the terms on which the United States and the Soviet Union negotiated the settlement of the Berlin blockade in 1949 promised benefits and the avoidance of disadvantages to both the United States and the

Soviet Union, and consequently it has proved viable.

However, it is also possible that one or the other side, while not satisfied with the terms of the settlement, will nevertheless agree to it because of the power which the other party is able to bring to bear in support of it. A prefers a settlement, unsatisfactory in itself, to no settlement at all, because the power of B threatens disadvantages greater than those to be expected from the terms of the settlement. The acquiescence of Japan, confronted with the combined power of the United States and Great Britain, to the humiliating terms of the Washington Treaty of 1922, which imposed naval inferiority upon her, is a typical instance. However, this is an extreme case. Most negotiated settlements are based on both the attractiveness of their terms and the fear of the power of one or the other or both of the contracting parties.

The United States finds herself today, for the first time in postwar history, without the power to threaten the Soviet Union with disadvantages sufficient to support whatever settlements the two nations might negotiate. What is worse for the long-term outlook for negotiations, the United States has thus far given no indication of summoning up the resolution to take the drastic measures necessary to repair its military weakness. So far as power sufficient to support a negotiated settlement is concerned, a massive and spectacular national effort at rearmament appears to be an indispensable precondition for successful negotiations in the present circumstances. Such an effort, while it could not restore the military balance of power immediately, would at least promise to do so in the future, and the Soviet Union, in anticipation of restored American power, might negotiate on terms which present American weakness makes unnecessary for her to consider. In the absence of such a national effort, with American weakness continuing and even becoming worse, the sole inducement for negotiations lies in the terms of settlement which the United States and the Soviet Union are willing to offer each

other. Since the United States found the Soviet terms unacceptable when her power exceeded that of the Soviet Union, it is unlikely that the Soviet Union will now agree to terms which the United States would find more acceptable.

What issues are outstanding between the United States and the Soviet Union which must be examined with a view to their negotiability? Four of them are territorial in character: Europe, the Far East, the Middle East, and the uncommitted nations. Two are functional and world-wide in their implications: disarmament and the control of atomic power.

One of these issues, on the face of it, cannot be settled by negotiations, because it lies outside the control of the prospective negotiators: the issue of the allegiance of the uncommitted nations. Only these nations themselves can decide whether they will choose the Communist or the Western road to political and social stability, or else circumstances will decide for them. Nothing that the United States and the Soviet Union can do to maintain or strengthen their influence in those countries, short of outright military intervention, is susceptible to negotiation. Here we are indeed in the arena of "peaceful coexistence" where two antagonistic political and social systems compete for the allegiance of men. Legal stipulations may try to preserve the peaceful character of that competition; they cannot in the nature of things regulate that competition itself, let alone negotiate it out of existence.

IF THIS analysis is correct, then it might be worth while to explore the possibility of a negotiated settlement for one region whose nations are not yet completely, or are only provisionally, committed to one or the other side—the Middle East. The Soviet Union has repeatedly offered to negotiate a settlement which would eliminate the Middle East from the military arena and restore the situation to what it was before the Baghdad Pact of 1955. Whether such a settlement was possible in the past is a moot question. Whether it is possible today needs to be ex-

plored. It certainly does not appear impossible from the outset.

The United States and the Soviet Union have two interests in common in the Middle East. They are both interested in seeing to it that the Middle East does not strike the spark that might ignite a world conflagration; and they are interested in settling the outstanding issues that might cause such a spark. Both interests can be satisfied only through cooperation and are likely to be jeopardized by military competition. The nations of the Middle East have no resources, military or otherwise, to settle the issues dividing them by their own efforts. The solution of the issues awaits a settlement negotiated among the great powers and imposed and guaranteed by them. Neither the United States nor the Soviet Union has a stake in any particular settlement; their interests coincide in wanting any kind of a settlement which is viable. The refusal of the then Soviet foreign minister, Shepilov, to commit himself to the Arab objectives with regard to Israel, during his visit to the Arab capitals in 1956, supports this interpretation of the Russian attitude, at least as it was at that time.

But not even this highly qualified optimism applies to negotiations about the Far East and Europe. The question of the recognition of Communist China by the United States and her admission to the United Nations is but the surface symptom of the unresolved conflict in the Far East. It is doubtful whether Communist China would allow herself to be recognized by the United States, even if the latter were willing to do so without conditions, since, as time goes on, non-recognition is likely to embarrass the United States more than Communist China. Admission to the United Nations would be acceptable to Communist China only if it carried with it the abandonment of Nationalist China, and here indeed we touch the core of the Far Eastern issue. The United States has consistently followed a policy of containing Communist China militarily at the historic outlets for Chinese expansion: Formosa, Korea, Southeast Asia.

and, more particularly, Viet Nam. The United States is not now willing to retreat from the military positions she occupies; Communist China is not prepared to recognize the legitimacy of these positions from which she is not now able to dislodge the United States. We are here, then, in the presence of a provisional *modus vivendi* whose terms are established by the existing distribution of military power and which can neither be changed nor recognized by a negotiated settlement.

IN REFLECTING upon the possibility of a negotiated settlement of the European question, one must again separate the surface arguments and solutions from the core of the problem. That core is represented by the question: should the Red Army stay where it happened to be at the end of the Second World War and where it is now—that is, in the heart of Europe, a hundred miles east of the Rhine? The Soviet Union has maintained that it ought to be there, at least as long as the armed forces of the United States are on the other side of the line of demarcation. The United States has maintained that it ought not to be there, in fact, that it ought not to be anywhere west of the Soviet frontiers. The Soviet Union has repeatedly suggested the division of Europe—and, as far as it is possible, the whole world—into two gigantic spheres of influence, one dominated by herself, the other by the United States; in particular, she has suggested the evacuation of all foreign armed forces from Europe west of the Russian frontiers. What James Reston reported from Washington in the *New York Times* of March 13, 1950, about the reaction to these spheres-of-influence proposals, now called “recognition of the status quo,” has remained true to this day: “. . . there is no evidence that officials here are even slightly interested in such a deal.”

Nevertheless, while the Soviet Union has an obvious interest in securing recognition of the legitimacy of her empire through a spheres-of-influence agreement, she can hardly have a serious interest in the evacuation of

all foreign armed forces from Europe west of her frontiers. For while such evacuation would greatly improve the military position of the Soviet Union (at least until intercontinental guided missiles have become operational on a large scale), it would inevitably lead to the collapse of her empire, based as it is upon little more than the presence of the Red Army. These considerations apply with even greater force to proposals for the complete or partial demilitarization of Central Europe—i.e., Germany at a minimum, and certain territories adjacent to Germany in the east and west at a maximum.

These proposals for “disengagement” offer the Soviet Union very few actual military advantages, while they impose two political liabilities upon her to which she cannot be expected to agree in the present circumstances. First, they would compel the Soviet Union to surrender her political control of those territories from which she would have to withdraw her armed forces, with incalculable consequences for her rule over the rest of her empire. Secondly, and more important, the nations of Eastern Europe which would thus be released from Russian domination would not remain in this state of “liberation” for long. From the moment of their rebirth at the end of the First World War, they have had to seek the protection of one or the other of the great powers, and for many centuries before none of them was independent. For them, the choice is not between Russian domination and freedom, but between Russian domination and some other—perhaps less oppressive and obnoxious—domination. It is in the nature of things that this new master could only be Germany, united and freed from the last restraints of international control and well on her way to becoming the third most powerful nation on earth. “Disengagement” in Central Europe, then, is likely to create not a neutral, demilitarized, politically quiescent zone, but a new German empire. Faced with a choice between a Russian and a German empire in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union’s decision is a foregone conclusion, and so any possibility of a negotiated neutral-

ization of all or part of Europe falls to the ground.

The decisive argument against "disengagement" is not that it is appeasement of the Soviet Union, but—quite to the contrary—that it expects a political and military sacrifice from the Soviet Union which it is impossible for her to make in the present circumstances. However, it may be only a few years until a new technology of war will have drastically reduced the political and military value of small nations adjacent to a great power's territory. When the United States and the Soviet Union will be able to destroy each other with weapons placed on their own territories, both can afford to retreat from their forward positions, and they will then be at least in a position to discuss seriously the neutralization of Europe.

In Europe, the United States and the Soviet Union have two overriding interests in common: to prevent the domination of all of Europe by the other side, and to remove Europe from the power contest altogether. The existing division of Europe into two spheres of influence serves the former interest; the military evacuation of Europe in the wake of a new technology of warfare—with the exception perhaps of symbolic land forces on either side of the present line of demarcation—will serve both. The nations of Europe have two interests in common which coincide with those of the superpowers: to preserve or restore their national identity, and to protect themselves from an atomic war which they could not wage but in which they could only suffer. These interests, too, would be served by the military neutralization of Europe.

The possibility of a negotiated settlement of the European question at some future time is predicated upon the preservation of the bi-polarity of atomic power: that is, this possibility would disappear if European nations acquired the ability to wage any kind of atomic war—tactical or strategic—on their own. Atomic weapons in the hands of European governments would at once commit the vital interests of the United States and the Soviet Union more deeply than ever to

Europe. The possibility of a negotiated European settlement is therefore intimately connected with disarmament and the control of atomic power.

DISARMAMENT as a general proposition, divorced from a settlement of the political conflicts which have caused the armaments race and, therefore, the need for disarmament in the first place, is as futile as its attraction seems to be ineradicable. There is not the slightest chance—in the light of both logic and historical experience—for negotiations to succeed which approach disarmament as though it were an independent technical problem composed of a number of separate issues, such as the number, quality, and location of weapons, the number and quality of armed forces, the modalities of inspection and other controls. This has been said so often that it is tiresome to repeat it.

It may be pointed out in passing that the current proposals for the international control of outer space, as part of a negotiated settlement, can only be propaganda devices. In the present stage of technology, it is no more possible to establish international control over outer space than it would have been for a nation or group of nations to control the high seas in the 15th century. However, one can imagine the international regulation of space through the allocation of orbits to different nations, after the model of the regulation of maritime and air traffic. But such an agreement would have nothing in common with control or disarmament in outer space.

Disarmament has proved viable, however, when it either followed a political settlement or was negotiated as an integral part of one. It so happens that the European settlement here envisaged as a future possibility is inseparable from a disarmament agreement limited to the nations of Europe and to the American and Russian forces stationed there. While such an agreement might be possible in the future as an expression of the common interests of the United States, the Soviet Union, and the nations of Europe, and as part of a political settlement translating those

interests into action, no such hope can be entertained for the disarmament negotiations which the United States and the Soviet Union have been conducting in the United Nations. Their failure is foreordained by the concentration of the negotiators upon the symptoms of the disease—the technicalities of the armaments race—rather than on its cause: the unresolved political conflict.

Yet even an agreement on limited disarmament will be impossible to negotiate once the so-called fourth-nation problem has got out of hand and an indefinite number of nations in Europe and elsewhere come to possess atomic weapons. As I wrote in the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* more than two years ago:

Atomic power, monopolistically controlled by the United States and the Soviet Union and keeping each other's destructive capability in check, is a force for peace, however precarious. Atomic power, haphazardly distributed among a number of nations, is bound to be a source of unprecedented insecurity, if not of panic. . . . Compared with the anarchy and limitless violence which then will reign, the first decade of the atomic era might well appear in retrospect as a kind of golden age in which the atomic stalemate between two nations guaranteed an uneasy atomic peace.

Here the interests of the United States, the Soviet Union, and all the other nations

of the world most manifestly coincide. A negotiated settlement which would satisfy these interests would have to revive both the idea underlying the Acheson-Baruch-Lilienthal proposals of 1946—i.e., the supranational control of the atomic power possessed by nations other than the two superpowers—and the idea underlying the Charter of the United Nations—i.e., the exercise of control over matters upon which the peace and order of the world depend, by the nations which have the power to exercise it.

The willingness of the United States and the Soviet Union at least to face this supreme issue in common will indeed provide the iron test of their willingness to negotiate in earnest on anything. If the United States and the Soviet Union should prove unable to negotiate on an issue that so manifestly affects their physical survival, it is difficult to see how they could negotiate, let alone agree on, less urgent and less obviously vital issues. Nor, one must add, is it easy to see how a settlement of these minor issues could matter so long as the overriding issue of the supranational control of atomic power remains unsolved. For who can care whether a divided or a united Germany will be atomized, or whether a Formosa ruled by Chiang Kai-shek or Mao Tse-tung will be laid to waste?